



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: Community Development Department (CDD) Staff

Date: December 2, 2020

Re: **Alewife Quadrangle Northwest (Srinivasan, et al.) Zoning Petition**

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Overview

Petitioner: Arvind Srinivasan, et al. (group of at least 10 registered voters)

Petition: To amend Section 20.90 of the Zoning Ordinance to modify the provisions of the existing Alewife Overlay District 1 (AOD-1), also referred to as the Quadrangle Northwest. A proposed new Section 20.95.5 would allow increased building height and Gross Floor Area (GFA) exemptions in AOD-1 by Planning Board special permit, provided that certain conditions are met. Revisions are proposed to the current Section 20.95.11.1, which grants additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to projects that include public improvements throughout the Alewife Overlay Districts.

Context: The Petition is substantially similar to previously filed petitions (formerly referred to as Navia, et al., Hartvigsen, et al., and Srinivasan, et al.) and heard by the Planning Board on October 22, 2019, December 17, 2019, and September 8, 2020. The Planning Board has not issued a recommendation, and most recently continued the hearing with the understanding that CDD staff would draft language that more closely aligns with the Planning Board's goals for zoning in the area. The Ordinance Committee of the City Council has not held a hearing on this petition since October 23, 2019. As before, the Petition is being presented by representatives of the development company Cabot, Cabot and Forbes ("CC&F"), an owner of several properties in AOD-1.

Summary: The current Petition remains largely the same as the version filed in July 2020, with some minor changes to the language.

Report: This memo focuses on CDD staff's recommended version of the zoning language and explains the overall approach to drafting this revision. For more analysis on past iterations of this zoning concept, see the three previous staff memos that are attached to this memo.

Planning Board Comments on the Petition

Throughout the review of this Petition, many Planning Board members have been amenable to the general development concept as presented by the Petitioners' representatives, CC&F. However, members did not believe that the zoning language in the Petition adequately reflected the Board's desired outcomes. Specifically, Planning Board members raised the following points:

- The Planning Board requested that this development proposal should be required to include a bridge over the MBTA railroad tracks in order to receive additional height and floor area for the proposed project. More discussion may be needed on whether such a bridge would be expected to carry only pedestrians and bicyclists or if other modes of transportation should be supported;
- The Planning Board further requested that high-bay, light-industrial uses should occupy the full ground level of non-residential buildings, aside from ancillary spaces that are necessary to serve other uses; and that
- Overall, development outcomes should conform to the recommendations of the Alewife District Plan.

At the conclusion of the September 8, 2020 public hearing, the Planning Board requested that CDD staff draft a new version of the zoning language that is more consistent with the intent reflected by CC&F's most recent presentation, which was supported by Planning Board members.

Staff Response

In all iterations of the Petition, the Petitioner's approach has been to create separate sections for individual modifications to the Zoning Ordinance, including separate sections modifying height, allowing for GFA exemptions, establishing a master plan review process, and referencing the Alewife District Plan. At the direction of the Planning Board, Planning Board Staff has prepared a version that maintains much of the same content but takes a more integrated approach to structuring the zoning language. All of the provisions are contained in a new section, 20.930 Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Development, that follows established special permit processes for multi-parcel site plan review. As requested by the Planning Board, this approach clearly links requirements that are expected of a developer to relief from certain development standards within the scope of a holistic review process. As a result, the zoning will allow development outcomes similar to what the Board has seen, with less chance of unexpected outcomes.

The overall structure of Planning Board Staff's version of the petition language is outlined below:

20.930 – Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Development

20.930.1 – Statement of purpose

20.930.2 – Scope and application process

20.930.3 – Process and criteria for Planning Board review and approval

20.930.4 – Modifications to standards that may be approved by the Planning Board

This text is provided for the Board's consideration. In making its recommendation to the City Council, the Planning Board may endorse Planning Board staff's approach, with modifications, or may suggest other modifications to the Petition.

Appendix 1

Planning Board Staff’s Proposed Zoning Text

20.930 Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Development.

20.930.1 Purpose. This Section is intended to establish a consolidated Master Plan review procedure and specific modifications to development standards for phased, multi-site projects seeking special permits within the provisions of Section 20.90 applicable to the Quadrangle Northwest District (AOD-1). The primary purpose is to advance the objectives of the Alewife District Plan and other applicable City policies and plans by encouraging well-planned development incorporating desired land uses and public improvements.

20.930.2 Master Plan Proposal. An application for special permits from the Planning Board for development in the Quadrangle Northwest District under the provisions of the Alewife Overlay Districts in Section 20.90, along with any other special permits requested, may be submitted in the form of a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Proposal subject to the following provisions:

- (a) *Development Parcel.* A Quadrangle Northwest Development Parcel subject to the provisions of this Section shall contain one or more contiguous or noncontiguous lots wholly or partially within the Quadrangle Northwest District. The minimum size of a Development Parcel shall be the greater of (1) three acres or (2) seventy-five percent of the area of a lot or combination of lots (a) in existence as of August 27, 2020 and (b) held in common ownership where it is proposed to incorporate any portion of such lot or lots within the Development Parcel.
- (b) *Aggregate Development Standards.* For the purpose of a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Proposal, the Quadrangle Northwest Development Parcel shall be considered a single lot for purposes of calculating allowable GFA and GFA bonuses, Floor Area Ratio, dwelling units, parking, loading, bicycle parking, and open space requirements.
- (c) *Master Plan Proposal Submission.* A Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Proposal shall contain a list of special permits being sought, all other forms and documentation required for the special permits being sought, and the following Master Plan information in sufficient detail that the Planning Board can reasonably assess the impact of the Master Plan and its conformance with the Master Plan Criteria set forth in Section 20.930.4:
 - (1) Site Development Plan — describing how the Master Plan area is divided into distinct building sites, streets, and open spaces and showing the locations and conceptual designs of streets, open spaces, and other site infrastructure, including cross-sections and elements such as paving, plantings, grading, and other major site features;
 - (2) Development Program – summarizing the major development characteristics of the Master Plan including proposed land uses by Gross Floor Area, number of dwelling units, parking spaces, loading bays, long-term and short-term bicycle parking spaces, and open space, both for the Quadrangle Northwest Development Parcel at an aggregate level and for each component building site, presented in tabular form;

- (3) Site Massing Plan — illustrating the height and massing of building volumes for each proposed building site, including the massing of mechanical equipment located above the roofs of buildings, and including studies of anticipated shadow impacts;
- (4) Parking and Loading Plan — identifying the locations, sizes, and number of spaces of all vehicle parking facilities, bicycle parking facilities, and facilities for loading or other vehicular service functions, and an operations plan describing how the facilities will be assigned and managed;
- (5) Connectivity Plan — illustrating all pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation routes within the Master Plan area, their connections to nearby public circulation routes and destinations outside the Master Plan area, and approximate locations of access and egress points on each building and parking facility within the Master Plan area;
- (6) Open Space Plan — illustrating and quantifying the areas of all proposed open space and the ownership and designation of each area, as well as descriptions of major design elements and themes to be incorporated into each space and the types of uses and activities that could be accommodated in each space, including areas that will be designated for programmed uses;
- (7) Ground Floor Tenancing and Activation Plan — illustrating the conceptual arrangement of uses at the ground story of each building in the Development Parcel, in particular light industrial uses or community-focused businesses that require light industrial space as identified in the Alewife District Plan, along with retail and other active uses, residential and office lobbies, and utility spaces, and plans for programming and activating those spaces including a report from a specialist describing strategies for recruiting and supporting tenants in a manner that will support the goals of the Alewife District Plan;
- (8) Housing Plan — providing the approximate number and mix of housing unit types proposed on each residential site;
- (9) Phasing Plan — describing the general sequence and timeline for the detailed design and construction of all major project elements, including buildings, landscaping, streets, and utilities, and the completion or conveyance of any public infrastructure or property interests;
- (10) Sustainability Plan — describing: (i) how the sustainability requirements set forth in Section 22.20 will be met; (ii) expected greenhouse gas emissions from the development and strategies employed to improve energy efficiency and support renewable energy production through individual building design and by utilizing existing or new district-wide energy systems, with reference to the recommendations of the City’s Net Zero Action Plan; and (iii) expected vulnerability of the development to the effects of climate change, including increased precipitation, flood risk, temperature, and urban heat island effect, and strategies to promote resiliency within individual building sites and within the Master Plan as a whole, including natural stormwater management systems, increased vegetation and shade, and measures to withstand and recover from extreme

climatological events, with reference to the recommendations of the City's relevant Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience planning documents;

(11) Transportation Plan — incorporating: (i) a Transportation Impact Study required by Section 19.20; (ii) a Shared Parking Study that identifies opportunities for reducing the total amount of parking required to serve all uses through the sharing of parking spaces by multiple uses; (iii) a study of the impacts of increased demand on public transportation services in the Alewife area; (iv) a description of the development's relationship to future regional rail, bus, pedestrian/bicycle, and other transportation system connections in the area; and (v) a Transportation Demand Management and Mitigation program describing measures to offset or mitigate the development proposal's impacts on transportation systems, including but not limited to impacts of truck traffic and loading activities;

(12) Environmental Comfort Plan — providing professional assessments of the impacts of the development on neighboring properties and the general public in terms of excessive noise, lighting, wind, and shadows, and describing measures taken to mitigate such impacts through building location and massing, arrangement of uses, screening, and other building and site improvements; and

(13) Architectural Character Plan — describing general approaches to the design of buildings, landscaped areas, streets, and pathways, identifying the type of visual character that the development will aim to achieve, with the expectation that specific designs of individual buildings and spaces will be reviewed in further detail as they are developed.

20.930.3 Master Plan Approval. The Planning Board may grant a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit, incorporating all requested special permits for the Development Parcel, subject to the following provisions:

(a) *Criteria.* In addition to the general special permit criteria set forth in Section 10.43, the Project Review Special Permit criteria set forth in Section 19.25, and all other criteria applicable to the special permits being sought, the Planning Board shall find that the following criteria are met when granting a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit:

(1) The Master Plan is in substantial conformance with the vision, goals, and recommendations set forth in the Alewife District Plan, including but not limited to the topics of land use, open space, urban form, mobility, climate and environment, housing, economy, and zoning, and with any urban design guidelines published by the City pursuant to the Alewife District Plan;

(2) The Master Plan is in substantial conformance with applicable standards for flood and heat resilience recommended through the City's Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience planning efforts; and

(3) The Master Plan will result in the completion of a publicly accessible connection for bicyclists and pedestrians, at a minimum, across the railroad right of way between the

Triangle District and the Quadrangle Northwest District, with conditions incorporated into the project phasing that will ensure its completion.

(b) *Conditions.* The Quadrangle Northwest District Master Plan Special Permit shall set forth conditions to ensure that the applicable criteria are met, including but not limited to the following conditions:

(1) Approved land uses and dimensional characteristics of the Master Plan at an aggregate level and for individual building sites;

(2) Required public improvements and other benefits such as infrastructure and open space;

(3) Required measures to mitigate development impacts, including but not limited to transportation impacts and construction activity;

(4) Procedures for review and approval of the designs of individual buildings, open spaces, public improvements, and other components of the Master Plan; and

(5) Timing and phasing for completion of the different components of the Master Plan, including but not limited to required public improvements, benefits, and mitigation.

(c) *Commencement.* The commencement of construction of any single building approved in a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit shall constitute exercise of the special permit for purposes of M.G.L. Chapter 40A and Section 10.46 of this Zoning Ordinance. The timing of completion shall be set forth by the Planning Board in the conditions of the special permit, which timing may be extended by the Planning Board upon a showing of good cause, and shall be subject to other conditions related to timing and phasing set forth in the special permit conditions.

(d) *Amendments.* A Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit may identify specific modifications to the Master Plan that may be subject to future approval by a written determination of the Planning Board. Otherwise, the Planning Board shall determine whether a proposed modification is a Major Amendment or Minor Amendment according to the standards set forth in Sections 12.37.1 through 12.37.3 of this Zoning Ordinance.

20.930.4 Modifications to Standards. Except as otherwise set forth herein, any project receiving a Quadrangle Northwest District Master Plan Special Permit shall comply with all other applicable development standards set forth in this Zoning Ordinance. The following modifications may be authorized by the Planning Board upon granting a Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit:

(1) The Additional FAR Applicable to Public Improvements set forth in Section 20.95.11 of this Zoning Ordinance shall be applicable to a Quadrangle Northwest Development Parcel, and the provisions of Paragraph (1) of Section 20.95.11 may be applied to a publicly accessible pedestrian bridge connection across the railroad right of way between the Quadrangle Northwest District and the Triangle District.

(2) The height of any building, regardless of use, may be increased to a maximum of eighty-five (85) feet, but shall remain subject to the limitations of Section 20.95.2, Paragraph 1(a) within 100 feet or 200 feet of a residential or Open Space district, provided the Planning Board finds that the entire leasable ground story of any non-residential building (excluding entrances/exits, lobbies, circulation, utilities, loading, and other functions necessary to serve upper-story uses or the building as a whole) is planned, designed, and constructed for the occupancy of light industrial uses and/or consumer-facing uses as described in the Economy Recommendations of the Alewife District Plan, with floor-to-ceiling heights that the Board finds to be suitable for such uses.

(3) If the Planning Board finds that the ground story of any building requires elevation above the existing mean grade in order to conform to flood resilience standards as established by the City, then the maximum height of any building may be further increased by not more than four (4) feet or the difference between the ground story finished floor elevation and the existing mean grade, whichever is lesser. To make such finding, the Planning Board shall have received and reviewed a written report from the City Engineer describing flood resilience standards applicable and the impact of those standards to the development site.

(4) Spaces within the ground story of any non-residential building that are reserved for light industrial uses or consumer-facing uses as described in the Economy Recommendations of the Alewife District Plan may be excluded from the calculation of Gross Floor Area for the purpose of applying the limitations and requirements of this Zoning Ordinance, provided that the dimensions of such spaces, their permitted range of approved uses, and other conditions to ensure that the intent of the Alewife District Plan is met shall be set forth in writing by the Planning Board in the Quadrangle Northwest Master Plan Special Permit.

(5) Applicable minimum parking requirements shall be waived, and the Planning Board shall set forth maximum limitations and other conditions pertaining to the development and operation of off-street parking facilities in accordance with the Mobility Recommendations of the Alewife District Plan.

(6) Applicable yard requirements and limitations, with the exception of requirements for yards abutting a residential or Open Space district as set forth in Paragraph (2) of Section 20.95.31 of this Zoning Ordinance, shall be modified to the extent necessary to conform to the recommended building setbacks and street sections recommended in the Urban Form and Mobility Recommendations of the Alewife District Plan, as approved by the Planning Board.

Appendix 2

List of Prior CDD Memos to the Planning Board Re: Alewife Quadrangle Northwest Overlay District Zoning Petitions

Memo dated October 17, 2019: https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Amendments/2019/alewifequadrangle/zngamend_alewifequad_cddmemo_20191017.pdf

Memo dated December 10, 2019: https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Amendments/2019/alewifequadrangle/zngamend_alewifequad_cddmemo_20191210.pdf

Memo dated August 28, 2020: https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Amendments/2020/alewifequadranglenorthwestrefiled/CDDMemo_Srinivasau_FINAL.pdf